

Introduction to Cultural Studies

Lecture 9: Memory and Identity

1) Memory Studies: Cultural Memory

2) Individual and Collective Identities

1) Memory Studies: Cultural Memory

Memory Studies:

Neurology:	'hardware', neuronal basis of memory processes
Psychology:	cognitive and emotional processes, thought and experience
Psychoanalysis/ Psychotherapy:	memory and healing
Sociology:	memory in communal narratives
History:	the reliability of human memory in written sources
Politics:	(re-)constructions of the past in symbolic forms
Art History / Literary Studies / Cultural Studies:	the cultural heritage as embodied in paintings and books, plus, more recently, ideas and practices as well as artefacts of all kinds

Cultural Memory:

“With the term ‘cultural memory,’ scholars describe all those processes of a biological, medial or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in socio-cultural contexts. Cultural memory entails remembering *and* forgetting. It has an individual and a collective side, which are, however, closely interrelated.”

(Erl 2012, 238)

Memory Studies in English and American Studies:

- the role of mnemonics and mnemotechnics in oral contexts and their transformation in writing/print culture (such as, for the ongoing significance of the ancient *ars memoriae* in the early modern period)
- intertextuality / intermediality as the medium of literary and cultural memory (cf. Eckstein 2006)
- the central importance of canon formation
- the interrelation of narrative, memory and identity (incl. trauma)
- British and American sites of memory (cf. Nora 1984-92 for France, Francois/Schulze 2001 for Germany)

[Deutsche Erinnerungsorte I – III]

[Nelson Column, Trafalgar Square / Nelson statue]

[Albert Memorial / Royal Albert Hall]

[Frank Newbould, 1942 (cf. Schama 1995, 11)]

[Diana Memorial Walkway]

Remembering the 'Indian Mutiny' (1857)
(aka 'The First War of Indian Independence)
(cf. Erll 2006)

1) The Experiential Mode

- > early eye-witness accounts,
e.g. Katherine Bartrum,
A Widow's Reminiscences of the Siege of Lucknow (1858)

↓ the indirect mode of remembering (witness > recorded memory)
Literary representation: Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901)

↓ the implicit mode drawing on structural analogies (e.g. betrayal)
Literary representation: Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (1894/95)

2) The Monumental Mode

- > turning history into myth in the high imperial juvenile 'Mutiny' novel,
e.g. G.A. Henty,
In Times of Peril (1881)

3) The Reflexive Mode

- > observation of the effects of cultural memory formation, e.g. the effects of firmly established 'Mutiny' topoi on the behaviour of characters in colonial modernist novels like E.M. Forster,
A Passage to India (1924)

4) The Demythologising Mode

- > satirical deconstruction of the Topoi of 'Mutiny' writing from a post-colonial perspective, complete abolishment of hero-villain patterns, re-assessment of the history of empire,
e.g. J.G. Farrell,
The Siege of Krishnapur (1973)

5) Transnational and Transcultural Memory Studies (cf. Erll 2012, 241)

- > transcending the methodological nationalism that comes with many modern incarnations of cultural memory,
e.g. Zadie Smith,
White Teeth (2000)

➔ A Success Story of Cultural Memory Correcting Itself?

The Experiential Mode



indirect and implicit modes



The Monumental Mode



indirect and implicit modes

(*A Passage to India*, ms. versions vs.



Persistence of high-Victorian
myth-making:

J. Masters, *Nightrunners of Bengal* (1951)
C. Hibbert, *The Great Indian Mutiny* (1957)
S. David, *The Indian Mutiny* (2002)
Bollywood (*Lagaan* 2001, *The Rising* 2005)
...



The Reflexive Mode

A Passage to India, publ. version)



The Demythologizing Mode

Revisionary/Transcult. Appr.:

R. Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence* (1998)
V.S. Naipaul, *A Thousand Mutinies Now* (1990)
Vikram Chandra, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995)
...

Basic Concepts:

- memory = a) *Gedächtnis*; b) *Erinnerung*
 - a) organic memory as precondition for acts of remembering
 - + the product of and the collective term for memories that are collected and objectified through
 - b) the process of remembering in acts of remembering
- active vs. passive memory
- episodic vs. semantic memory (identity formation vs. knowledge)
- embodied/procedural memory vs. disembodied memory (archive)
- storage memory vs. functional memory
(Assmann; cf. Niklas Luhmann: culture vs. semantics)
- individual vs. collective memory ('we' vs. others)

2) Individual and Collective Identities

The paradox of individuality: What we share is that we're different



individualisation (self-examination, self-fashioning)

vs.

standardization (control, surveillance) as conflicting impulses in modern culture



the autonomy of the individual depends upon forms of recognition (and/or rejection)



the problem of subjectivity at the centre of modern culture

Dimensions of Modernisation (Cf. Degele/Dries 2005):

- differentiation
- individualisation
- rationalisation
- domestication
- acceleration
- globalisation
- integration

➔ the ambivalox dialectics of modernisation

Basic Concepts:

Identity is not a given, but a cultural, biographical construction

- 'person': bearers of roles and status (i.e. socially defined)
- parameters: sex, age, wealth
- 18th century: discovers of the 'value of sociality' (Shaftesbury): norms of 'good vs. evil' are replaced by 'civil vs. crude'
- norms of gender identity establish cultural hierarchies
- inclusive identity (conformity with roles and norms; 'opting in')
vs.
exclusive identity (insisting on difference as the basis for authenticity and authority, 'opting out' > a new social role emerging with modern culture)
- split personalities, multiple identities (doppelganger motif) as indicators of the pressures and paradoxes of modernity?

Collective Identities:

- parameters: territory, kinship(family, tribe etc.), race, language, religion, social/political organisation, 'the national spirit' (Herder), culture
- self-organisation (emergence, evolution, history)
vs.
political agendas of homogenization
- national identities are based on mythologized history
(cf. the imperial myth of the 'Indian Mutiny')
- identity politics vs. self-universalising paradigms
(e.g. affirmative action, canon revision etc.)
- interculturality – multiculturalism – transculturality

Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani* (2006):

– Serve him right he got his muthafuckin face fuck'd, shudn't b callin me a Paki, innit.

After spittin his words out Hardjit stopped for a second, like he expected us to write em down or someshit. Then he sticks in an exclamation mark by kickin the white kid in the face again.

– Shudn't b callin us Pakis, innit, u dirty gora.

Again, punctuation came with a kick, but with his left foot this time so it was more like a semicolon.

– Call me or any a ma bredrens a Paki again an I'ma mash u an yo family. In't dat da truth, Pakis?

– Dat's right, Amit, Ravi and I go, – dat be da truth.

The three a us spoke in sync like we belonged to some tutty boy band, the kind who sing the chorus like it's some blonde American cheerleader routine. Hardjit, Hardjit, he's our man, if he can't bruck-up goras, no one can. Ravi delivers his standard solo routine: – Yeh, blud, safe, innit. [...]

Billy Bragg, “A Pict Song” (*William Blake*, 1996)

Rome never looks where she treads.
Always her heavy hooves fall
On our stomachs, our hearts or our heads;
And Rome never heeds when we bawl (call).
Her sentries pass on — that is all,
And we gather behind them in hordes,
And plot to reconquer the Wall,
With only our tongues for our swords.

*We are the Little Folk—we!
Too little to love or to hate.
Leave us alone and you'll see
How we can drag down the State!*

Mistletoe killing an oak—
Rats gnawing cables in two—
Moths making holes in a cloak—
How they must love what they do!
Yes—and we Little Folk too,
We are busy as they—
Working our works out of view—
Watch, and you'll see it some day!

*We are the Little Folk—we!
Too little to love or to hate.
Leave us alone and you'll see
How we can drag down the State!*

No indeed! We are not strong,
But we know Peoples that are.
Yes, and we'll guide them along
To smash and destroy you in War!
We shall be slaves just the same?
Yes, we have always been slaves,
But you—you will die of the shame,
And then we shall dance on your graves!

*We are the Little Folk — we!
Too little to love or to hate.
Leave us alone and you'll see
How we can drag down the State!
We are the worm in the wood!
We are the rot at the root!
We are the taint in the blood!
We are the thorn in the foot!*

(Lyrics by _____)

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